



talking about...

March 2007

... *designing better relationships for better outcomes*

A newsletter for those interested in ontological coaching

What is learning?

"Develop a passion for learning. If you do, you will never cease to grow."

... Anthony J. D'Angelo

I am a member of Yahoo group for coaches and trainers and recently there was a post where the writer wanted help in the comparison between thinking and learning. There were a number of responses to this post, but the underlying assumption was that learning purely related to gaining knowledge. That learning is an intellectual exercise.

This view seems to be quite widespread throughout our society. Our education system is structured primarily around the acquisition of knowledge and students generally gain accreditation by passing exams where they have to demonstrate a satisfactory knowledge of a particular subject. It also seems to apply in our workplaces. It appears to be more and more difficult for people to get away from their work to be involved in learning in the workplace. Whereas it was common twenty years ago for people to go on five day programs, these days this is much less the case. It is often a challenge for people to find a day for a learning event, more time than that is often out of question. If learning is simply about the acquisition of knowledge then this makes sense. A student can go to a one day program and gain knowledge about something. However, if learning is more than gaining knowledge then this would predicate a different approach to learning. One that involves the development of skills and a way of being over a period of time. Ultimately, it begs the question, "what is the purpose of learning?"

Although some learning is done to simply achieve an accreditation, most of our learning takes place in an endeavour to develop ourselves. This can be seen in two ways – developing our knowledge and taking new actions. From an ontological perspective, we claim that learning takes place when an assessment is made of someone's capacity to take action that they could not take before. This does not exclude the value of gaining knowledge as knowledge allows us to see things in a different way and make different choices. From an ontological perspective, we can say that we have learnt something when we can take the action of answering questions we couldn't answer before. However, far greater value is found in learning that we can apply in our everyday living. It is not knowledge but the application of knowledge that can make a difference to our lives providing the opportunity for us to become who we want to become.

We invite you to consider this from your own perspective. Why do you read what you read? Why do you go to school or to seminars or to workshops or to university? What has you put effort into your learning? Your answers to these questions may help you refine what you want to learn and how you seek to learn it.

"Flying is learning how to throw yourself at the ground and miss."

... Douglas Adams (1952 - 2001) English novelist

Mailing List Etiquette ...

We found this one on the web ... It was originally created by Randy Woodward and is for all of you who have had experience with groups and blogs on the Internet

Wide-eyed Newbie:

Hi. I'm a new trainer and I am using a video in tomorrow's session. I'm wondering about the lights. Should I leave them on, dim them, or turn them off completely? Could someone on the list give me some quick advice on this? Thanks!

Expert #1:

What on earth are you using video for? No learning of any value can come from video!

Expert #2:

First, you need to define, "what is light?"

Expert #3:

How can you define light? You just know what it is.

Expert #2:

Everything can be defined. We can't pursue the issue any further unless we establish exactly what you mean by light.

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Expert #3:
OK, I define light as "light." The absence of darkness.

Expert #2:
If that's the definition, you must now define darkness.

Expert #3:
Darkness is the absence of light.

Expert #2:
That's no answer!

Expert #3:
That's my definition. Now lets discuss light.

Expert #2:
We can't continue until you answer in terms that I'm willing to acknowledge, "what is light." Why are you avoiding the issue?

Expert #3:
I'm not! Definitions aren't the issue. Light is the issue, blockhead.

Expert #2:
I'm not going to read a single word you write until you define light and dark. Are you ignorant or just afraid to? (Experts #2 and #3 then go off on a long thread of personal insults, but it doesn't matter because everyone else stopped reading them three messages ago.)

Huckster #1:
I thoroughly cover the use of lighting in my book "Everything I Know About Video Training." I won't go into it here, but copies are available from my web site.

Expert #4:
You can't adjust the lights until you've done an exhaustive needs analysis of the situation. Start by interviewing every employee, manager, and customer of your organization, the lighting manufacturer, VCR manufacturer, the video producer...

Huckster #2:
You need an expert. For a reasonable consulting fee, I will stand in your classroom and adjust the lights for you.

Free User:
I have the text of Dr. Noted Trainingguru's 1972 article on adjusting lights for filmstrips in the "files" section of my web site. This should be applicable. Feel free to download and distribute.

Expert #1:
THAT'S A COPYRIGHT VIOLATION!

Free User:
Copyright, schmopyright. I can do whatever I want as long as I don't make money from it. (And so is born another long thread of unrelated discussion).

Wide-eyed Newbie:
Uhm, yeah. Should I dim the lights or not?

Expert #1:
I think you're asking the wrong question. The correct question is: "Is it even possible to adjust the lights so they will be 100% perfectly comfortable for everyone in the room?" Of course it isn't. Therefore, even trying is a waste of time.

Huckster #3:
I have an in-house workshop, "Adjusting lights 101." For a reasonable fee plus travel and expenses, I will come to your facility and train up to 12

people.

Expert #5:
Are you sure the lights want to be changed? Have you considered waiting to see if the lights try to adjust themselves?

Huckster #4:
Why use a boring, old-fashioned video? For a reasonable fee, we'll custom produce a web-based training solution for whatever training problem you may be addressing.

Expert #1:
No learning of any value can come from web-based training!

Wide-eyed Newbie:
Sorry I brought it up. I think I'll go ask the janitor.

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